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ABSTRACT

This revised Program Quality Review Instrument focuses on the evaluation of seven functional components of center-based, preschool-age child development programs in California. The components are: (1) philosophy, goals, and objectives; (2) administration; (3) assessment of child and family; (4) developmental programming; (5) parent education and involvement; (6) community resources and involvement; and (7) evaluation. The component on developmental programming has six areas for evaluation. Indicators and items for use in assessing program quality are specified within components. The instrument identifies the Child Development Division's expectations for program implementation. The instrument is intended for use not only in reviewing program quality, but also in self-review, as a teaching tool, and as a basis for planning program improvement. Verification of program quality is made through documentation, observation, and interviews. Programs are rated excellent, good, adequate, or inadequate; inadequate programs are required to submit a program improvement plan within 30 days of program review. A glossary of terms used in the instrument is provided. (RH)

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Prepared by the
Child Development Division

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The revision of this instrument is due in large measure to the work of Michael Olenick of Los Angeles. Dr. Olenick utilized his experience as a preschool teacher and his training in testing, program evaluation, and child development and reviewed the experience of the Child Development Division (CDD) in the use of the original instrument. In addition, he interviewed many program staff who had used the original instrument and solicited their ideas for changes which needed to be made. Finally, the participation of CDD staff provided input to bring the instrument to its present form. Special recognition goes to Kay Witcher, Administrator, Field Services, Region III, for coordinating development of the instrument.

AUTHORITY

Senate Bill 863 (Education Code Section 8203, Chapter 798, Statutes of 1980) requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop standards for the implementation of quality programs and to identify areas for indicators of quality that shall include but not be limited to:

a. A physical environment that is safe and appropriate to the ages of the children and meets applicable licensing standards.

b. Program activities and services that are age appropriate and developmentally meet the needs of each child.

c. Program activities and services that meet the cultural, linguistic, and other special needs of children and families being served.

d. Family and community involvement.

e. Parent education.

f. Efficient and effective local program administration.

g. Staff that possesses the appropriate and required qualifications or experience, or both. The appropriate staff qualifications shall reflect the diverse linguistic and cultural make-up of the children and families in the child care and development program. The use of intergenerational staff shall be encouraged.

h. Support services for children, families, and providers of care.

i. Resource and referral services.

j. Alternative payment services.

k. Provision for nutritional needs of children.

l. Social services that include, but are not limited to, identification of child and family needs and referral to appropriate agencies.

m. Health services that include referral of children to appropriate agencies for services.

OVERVIEW

A quality child development program is characterized by developmentally appropriate activities for children, effective and efficient administration, parent and community involvement, and support services for the children and the parents.

Child care programs affect children directly through the environment which the child experiences and indirectly through events which then affect the child's environment. The child is the ultimate recipient of the total program. According to this description of the effects of child development and child care programs, program quality is a complicated process with various interrelated program components. Each component's operation depends to some degree on the other components. Together, all the components constitute quality.

Generally accepted principles of child development are to be used as guides in planning a child-centered program. An overlay to all that happens in the program must be a concern for the families being served. In other words, respect for, and sensitivity to, the language and culture presented by the children and their families must overlay every program and be readily discernible. Staff persons who speak and understand the language, or at least the dominant languages presented by program participants, must be present. Since as many as eight to ten languages may be spoken by the participants, program administrators must make every effort to ensure that no child or parent need rely on gestures, facial expressions, or broken language patterns for communication.

Because cultural diversity is abundantly present throughout California's child development programs, children, parents, and staff members are rich sources of understanding and appreciation of a variety of cultures and ethnic groups. The child development program is an excellent environment in which to prepare children for the diversity they are likely to encounter as they grow, enter school, and seek fulfillment as adults.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENT

This is the second generation of the Program Quality Review Instrument. Information from the analysis of approximately 300 Program Quality Reviews of center-based programs for preschool-aged children over a four-year period, phone interviews with child development field personnel at the annual Child Development Division Conference, personal interviews with Child Development Division field consultants and administrators, the present fiscal constraints, and an increasingly large body of information on program quality (which did not exist when the original instrument was designed) have been incorporated into the design of a new Program Quality Review instrument. It is closely related to the old document, although certain ambiguities in the scoring method have been eliminated and the instrument has been designed to be administered in one full day. Many of the individual descriptive items have been retained. However, the notion of strands has been replaced.

For a determination of the quality of a program, seven functional components will be evaluated. They are used as the basis for the Program Quality Review since they identify the expectations that the Child Development Division has for program implementation. These functional components include Philosophy, Goals and Objectives; Administration; Assessment of Child and Family; Developmental Program; Parent Education and Involvement; Community Resources and Involvement; and Evaluation.

Within each functional component there are indicators and sometimes items which the reviewers apply to determine whether or not the requirements of the functional component have been met.

Verification of the presence of an indicator or item will be made through documentation, observation, or interview. The instrument will indicate the verification method to be used. If documentation is required, it is incumbent upon the program staff to provide the materials which verify that the indicator or item is present. Functional component D, Developmental Program, has six areas which are evaluated since this is the one area where children and staff can be directly observed. Functional component G, Evaluation, has been added as an individual component to be examined. Agencies should determine their effectiveness and the quality of their functioning as a regular part of the program.

USES FOR THE INSTRUMENT

The Child Development Division designed this instrument to communicate in simple yet direct language, with the expectation that a respectful attitude regarding young children and their families, staff, and community would prevail. It is meant to fulfill four distinct purposes:

1. Self-Review

   It is required that governing boards and program staff will conduct a review of themselves and will use the results to set program goals. The self-review should be useful to staffs preparing for a formal review.

2. A Teaching Tool

   For administrators, instructional staff, and governing boards, this instrument is designed to serve as a step-by-step approach for assessing the quality of the program.

3. Review of Program Quality

   The Child Development Division (CDD) will use the instrument to monitor and rate programs for program quality. In the process CDD will also evaluate the extent to which the activity or plan is appropriate. Consultant assistance will be available to those programs that score below acceptable standards.

4. Program Improvement

   If a program has been rated in the "adequate" range and above, program staff will be encouraged to select areas of the program that the staff would like to work on for improvement.

RATING

Each program component has been given a certain number of points, and the total points of the seven components determine the program rating. Programs are assessed according to the indicators and items within the components. The number of points earned by the program are totaled, and the program is rated as excellent, good, adequate, or inadequate.

Programs achieving a rating of "inadequate" are required to submit a program improvement plan which will bring their rating at least to the adequate range. Assistance may be provided by the consultant in selecting the areas to concentrate on for improvement. The program improvement plan must be submitted to the Child Development Division within thirty (30) calendar days after the date of the program quality review.

PREPARATION FOR AND CONDUCTING OF THE REVIEW

No later than September 1, programs to be reviewed during the fiscal year will be notified by letter. This notification will be followed by a phone call from the assigned consultant for the purpose of setting the specific date for the review. If the program has more than one center, the center(s) to be reviewed will be identified. A letter confirming the date for the review and what materials should be available will be sent to the program at least two weeks prior to the review. The program will also be asked to designate a small working space for the team.

Two people will conduct the review, and every effort will be made by the reviewers not to disturb the program operations. The review is expected to take one day, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This review time includes the following:

Entry meeting

The review team will meet with the program director and other appropriate staff to review the schedule, determine where needed materials are located, and answer procedural questions.

Tour of the center

A general tour of the center will familiarize the review team with the general layout.

Observation period

An observation period of at least 30 minutes will occur in the morning and afternoon on the day the review is conducted.

Review of written materials

Written materials which verify the presence of an item are to be available in one place. Confidential material should be appropriately protected.

Interviews

Individual interviews will be conducted with the program director. Either individual or group interviews will be conducted with staff, parents, and board members.

Exit meeting

At the conclusion of the review, the reviewers will share the results of the review with the program director and other staff, parents, or board members who can be present.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

A. Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

The program philosophy is based upon a body of knowledge which recognizes the appropriate developmental needs of preschool-age children. The philosophy is used to formulate clear program goals and objectives and to set the whole program in motion. The goals and objectives recognize that all children develop according to a generally recognized normative pattern. The goals and objectives also recognize that children may reach these norms at different times and that variations may be due to individual differences, special needs, or cultural differences. All of these differences are incorporated into an overall plan. The plan includes activities which will be provided to children, to parents, and to the staff since children are affected by their families, the community in which they live, and the staff.

Documentation

1.1. A governing body or board designee annually approves the overall child development program goals and objectives which are based upon the philosophy of the program.

1.2. The goals and objectives address the following areas:

- Administration
- Staffing
- Support services
- Parent education and involvement
- Community involvement
- Developmental activities for the children which recognize individual differences and the cultural diversity of families being served

1.3. The agency has a written plan to achieve the overall program goals and objectives which identifies person(s) responsible for achieving the goals.

Interview

1.4. Overall goals and objectives can be articulated by the program director.

1.5. The developmental goals and objectives can be articulated by the caregiving staff.

B. Administration

1. Personnel Policies

Personnel policies and procedures are developed and set forth to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency in overall program administration. The formulation of personnel policies and procedures should be a joint effort between the agency board, administration, and staff. It is the administration's responsibility to provide written personnel policies and procedures to all staff and provide clarification, training, and revision of the established policies and procedures as needed.

Documentation

1.1. Agency has a board-approved staff handbook or written material which includes but is not limited to philosophy and goals and objectives of the child development program and personnel policies.

1.2. Personnel policies include but are not limited to:

(1) Employment procedures
(2) Description of benefits
(3) Evaluation procedures
(4) Opportunities for upward mobility
(5) Layoff plan
(6) Termination procedures
(7) Grievance procedures
(8) Confidentiality of staff records

1.3 The handbook or written material includes policies and procedures for:

(1) Child abuse reporting
(2) Maintaining a safe and healthy environment
(3) Communication with parents
(4) Emergencies
(5) Confidentiality of staff records

1.4. Agency has a written orientation plan for new employee that includes the following:

(1) Description of the probationary period
(2) Training activities that will occur during the probationary period, including discussion of items specified in (1.2) above.

1.5. Agency has a written orientation plan for volunteers and substitutes.

Interview

1.6. Each staff member receives a copy of the staff handbook or written material covering personnel policies and procedures. (Interview a minimum of three (3) staff members.)

2. Staff Development

A well-trained staff is essential to the success of the program. Staff members should have a clear understanding of program policies, procedures, job expectations, and, for caregivers, child development theory and practice. Staff members should have an opportunity to identify their staff development needs and provide input into the overall staff development plan. The provision of on-the-job training assists staff in improving their job skills and encourages professional growth.

Documentation

2.1. Agency has a plan for staff development and provides regular staff development training which includes but is not limited to the following topics:

(1) Safety in the children's environment
(2) Health and sanitation procedures for adults and children
(3) Child abuse reporting
(4) Child development
(5) Cultural awareness
(6) Observation techniques and skills
(7) Response to nonverbal cues of young children

2.2. Agency has a method for communicating information internally which includes the following:

(1) Monthly staff meetings that include a prepared agenda and minutes
(2) A process for staff to make contributions to agendas
(3) A process for transmitting written messages

Interview

2.3. The staff development plan is based upon the needs and interests of the staff. (Interview a minimum of three (3) caregiving staff members.)

2.4. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and their job description. (Interview the director and a minimum of three (3) staff members.)

C. Assessment of the Child and Family

An assessment of the developmental level of each child is maintained. The assessment may be formal or informal. A formal assessment may require the use of a trained practitioner. Informal assessment may include teacher observations, information from parents, and checklists. In any case, the information gathered about the child must be complete enough so that a sensible plan can be made. Care must be taken with the assessment information so that it is used to further the development of the child and information gathered is shared with the parent on a regular basis.

In addition, each family is evaluated to determine the particular needs that the family has and types of activities which would be useful to the family. Finally, assessment is continuous so that major and minor programmatic changes can be made, if need be, to reflect changes in the child and the family.

Documentation

1.1. At enrollment, information is obtained regarding family background, child rearing expectations, cultural expectations, dominant language, any special concerns the parent may have about the child, and parental needs.

1.2. Within 1 month after enrollment, developmental information is obtained on child's physical development, cognitive development, social-emotional development, language development, and communication skills.

1.3. Assessment is updated at least yearly to determine changes in child's needs and family needs.

1.4. Staff observes children to identify special needs.

1.5. Staff and parents confer on staff observations, and referrals are made.

1.6. Staff are involved in implementing the special need plan for children.

D. Developmental Program

Developmental programming encompasses six interrelated areas. These are curriculum, materials and equipment, environment, interactions, multicultural awareness, and nutrition. Each program area is necessary for developing a program meeting the individual needs of children while they are enrolled in care. Information gained from the children's assessment must be used in planning the developmental program, including any identified special needs.

1. Curriculum

Curriculum is defined as the provision, structure, and arrangement of activities. Research has demonstrated that different curriculum styles have different effects on children's development, both short term and long term. Curriculum also has an effect on staff behaviors. Curriculum should be both formal and informal and provide activities which are both structured and unstructured.

Curriculum consists of a variety of activities and is implemented in the following areas:

Documentation

1.1. Social-emotional development activities which provide opportunities for sharing, caring, handling emotions, dealing with conflict, promoting self-concept and self-esteem, role modeling, etc.

1.2. Cognitive development activities which develop problem solving skills and promote prereading and math skills, along with acquisition of basic science concepts.

1.3. Physical development activities which reflect a combination of large-motor and small-motor activities such as rough-and-tumble play, climbing, running, walking, manipulating, and eye-hand coordination.

1.4. Creative development activities which include materials available at the child's discretion, adult-directed art activities, as well as music, movement, and dance activities.

1.5. Language development activities which include receptive language activities such as listening activities, story reading, and story experiences. Children are encouraged to practice expressive productive language. Particular attention is given to children whose home language is other than English.

2. Materials and Equipment

There are enough materials and equipment in the classroom so that all children can be occupied in activities at the same time. Many materials available in the preschool classroom have multiple functions and can be used for a variety of different activities. Multiple-function material elicits more attention from children than equipment with single uses. For example, a puzzle can be considered physical development because small muscles are exercised; cognitive because spatial relations and one-to-one correspondence are experienced; receptive and expressive language because the picture can be talked about by the child as well as the adult; social-emotional because two children can work on the puzzle together.

Adequate materials and equipment related to the curriculum areas are provided. In actuality these materials and equipment may fulfill several different functions. (For example, dramatic play equipment can often be considered language development.) There are adequate numbers of materials which can be described as follows:

Observation

2.1. Dramatic Play - housekeeping areas, dress-up clothes, mirrors, puppets, blocks

2.2. Science and Math - materials related to plants, animals, weather, the world around us (e.g., materials such as leaves, rocks, matching games for color and shapes, counting games, cuisinaire rods, blocks, etc.)

2.3. Gross Motor - opportunities outdoors for jumping, running, climbing, balancing

2.4. Fine Motor - cutting, writing, eye-hand coordination, manipulative

2.5. Art - variety of materials for cutting and pasting, painting, drawing, coloring, molding and sculpting, etc.

2.6. Music - variety of music, listening devices, music making, dancing movement

2.7. Language and Communication - books, cassettes, stories.

3. Environment

The way in which the environment is designed and equipment is made available for children and adults to use has a strong effect on their behavior. For example, in open, unfilled areas children may run in an unfocused manner. And when large amounts of equipment are available, children are more likely to share, play in smaller groups, and be less aggressive. The adults in the environment are responsible for ensuring that attitudes of acceptance, caring, understanding, and equality of treatment for all the children are expressed in order to provide an emotionally supportive atmosphere for the children.

Observation

Environment is planned in the following ways:

3.1. Each child has individualized space (e.g., cubbies).

3.2. Children's work is displayed at the child's eye level.

3.3. Equipment and environment are organized.

3.4. Noisy and quiet areas are separate.

3.5. There are opportunities for small-group activities.

3.6. There are the opportunities for individual children to pursue own interests.

4. Interactions

There are many opportunities for adults to interact with children and for children to interact with each other. Social interactions have been shown to affect children's cognitive, social, and emotional experiences positively. Staff behaviors can affect children's peer relationships and children's involvement with the environment positively.

Observation

4.1. Adults responsible for the care of the children direct most of their interaction to the children.

4.2. Adults respond to the children's requests for attention patiently.

4.3. Adults give direction to the children clearly and offer guidance to those who don't understand.

4.4. Adults offer praise and encouragement to the efforts children make.

4.5. Adults refer to the children by name and further acknowledge the child by both listening to and initiating conversation.

4.6. Adults appear to enjoy being with the children.

4.7. Adults assist children in expressing emotions.

4.8. Adults explain concepts to children.

4.9. Adults elaborate and expand children's statements.

4.10. Interactions between children are promoted.

4.11. There is a balance between adult-directed and child-directed activities.

5. Multicultural Awareness

California has a rich diversity of cultures which will bring different strengths to American society. Children should be made aware that there are many cultural groups in the United States and especially in California which contribute to a more interesting society which can and must live in peace and harmony. Culture cannot be ignored, even when an agency's population appears to contain only one cultural group. Rather, children need to be made aware that there are many different cultural groups in this society. Although persons of different cultures may hold differing values and look, dress, and speak differently, children should be taught a sense of the equality of all. Culture has a very strong influence on children's behavior, and this fact may make different modes of programming more effective for some groups than for others. Therefore, the cultural differences between groups need to be recognized, and planning to incorporate these differences should be included. Program planning should include activities that are concrete and help children to see their own uniqueness and the need for cooperation and fair play.

Documentation

5.1. Information is available to staff regarding traditional ethnic and cultural observances.

5.2. Staff plans for learning opportunities, acknowledging the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the children and the community.

5.3. Planned activities are implemented which highlight each child's uniqueness.

6. Nutrition

Good nutrition is essential to the physical growth of the developing child. The program must provide a nutritious, well-balanced diet which meets each child's dietary needs and emerging eating skills. Mealtime should be an enjoyable experience, and food should be served in a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere. Staff should regard mealtime as a learning opportunity and should model and encourage healthy eating habits. Staff should also communicate with parents any unusual eating behavior observed and post a weekly menu which describes the meals and snacks being offered.

Observation

6.1. Food is prepared and served in a manner that is appropriate for the developmental level of the child.

6.2. A relaxed routine is established which makes mealtimes pleasant.

6.3. Menus reflect the cultures and preferences of the families enrolled.

6.4. Caregivers sit and eat with the children while modeling appropriate behavior and using mealtime as a learning experience.

Documentation

6.5. Activity plans include opportunities for children to learn about different foods.

E. Parent Education and Involvement

Parents can affect the quality of the child development program positively, and the program can affect the quality of the relationship parents have with their children. Parents should be comfortable in visiting the program whenever they feel the need. To be effective, the program attempts to involve parents in all aspects of the program. Parents are provided opportunities to discuss child rearing issues with staff, and the program has a plan for parent education.

Documentation

1.1. Parents are advised of eligibility and priorities of program to decide on an appropriate choice.

1.2. Arrangements are made for the parents and child to visit prior to the child's first day.

1.3. Staff shares with the parent unusual occurrences of child's day.

1.4. The program has a plan for parent education.

1.5. At least two conferences are scheduled each year to discuss the child's program with the parent.

1.6. Families are invited to assist in program support activities.

1.7. Families are invited to work with staff in organizing program support activities.

1.8. Regular parent meetings are held.

1.9. A parent survey is conducted annually to determine parent education interests.

F. Community Resources and Involvement

Community outreach enhances the quality of program operations. The agency should inform the community about the program and should be visible and active in the life of the community. Program personnel should be knowledgeable of and utilize available community resources and social services agencies in order to support the program and assist families in meeting their needs. The program should establish a process for referring or providing enrolled families with social services or health care and a process for seeking donations and contributions.

Documentation

1.1. Agency has a written process for reaching out to the community to make it aware of the program and its need and services.

1.2. Social services information is available to parents regarding free or low-cost health care in their community that provides assistance with basic and emergency family need.

1.3. Current records are maintained for each child regarding health and social service needs and services provided. (Review 10 percent of the children's files but no fewer than five files.)

1.4. Staff documents conferences with parents regarding each child's health care needs and referrals. (Review 10 percent of the children's files but no fewer that five files.)

1.5. Agency refers children to health and social services as appropriate.

Interview

1.6. Agency invites the community to donate goods and services to the program.

G. Evaluation

A program evaluation plan should be developed and implemented in order to determine if the program goals and objectives have been met and to evaluate the level of quality within the program. Program evaluation is an ongoing process and should involve the participation of the governing body, staff, and parents. Programmatic changes should be made as needed.

Documentation

1.1. Director, program staff, and parents annually evaluate in writing the developmental program to determine whether the specific needs of the children and families are being met.

1.2. The governing body and administration staff review all aspects of the program annually and recommend changes in writing as necessary.

Interview

1.3. Results of evaluations are used to modify the program, if necessary. (Interview the program director to identify changes, if any, which have been installed.)

GLOSSARY

ACTIVITY: Specific short-term functions that will lead to the achievement of a related objective for children, parents, staff, or community.

ACTIVITY PLANS: A (written) plan of daily activities provided for a group of children or an individual child based on identified needs of the child(ren), including these development areas: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and communicative.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE: Used in this instrument to indicate an activity, learning experience, or behavior that positively reinforces and does not disparage a child's culture or origin.

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE: Used in this instrument to describe behaviors referenced against accepted developmental stages.

EVALUATION: Used in this instrument to describe a process whereby a plan, procedure, or policy is reviewed for effectiveness and/or appropriateness and includes intent to make necessary changes.

GOALS: The desired long-term general results expected for the total program to achieve for the child(ren), parents, staff, and community involved. Goals are timeless and are measured through the achievement of related objectives.

LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE: Used in this instrument to indicate that a child's dominant language is not disparaged and is used in the child development program along with standard English.

MULTICULTURAL: Used in this instrument to indicate an activity or experience which exposes children to the traditions, customs, and history of the various cultures found in society.

OBJECTIVE: A more specific result (of long or short duration) expected for children, parents, staff, or community of the child development program leading to the achievement of a related goal.

POLICY: Used in this instrument to mean an overall administrative position of the agency, not in conflict with state regulations, which embraces the general goals and objectives of the agency and establishes operating procedures to meet these goals and objectives.

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